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AUTHOR Luskin, Bernice; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Described is a Title III work study model to provide a 4-year vocational training program for approximately 40 handicapped junior and senior high school students in Westport, Connecticut. Program activities (such as conferences with employers) and the needed professional personnel (such as a school psychologist) are outlined for each of the following areas: teacher aide training; vocational experiences in health care, food services, laundry, occupational therapy, and grounds maintenance; work as garage attendants; and the provision of positive feedback for students' program performance. Cases and comments of several students in the program are provided to illustrate the positive effects of the project. The project evaluation is noted to reveal that positive feedback was transmitted to the students; that parents reported personal growth in their son or daughter; and that 11 students showed positive and generally substantial growth in their behavior patterns. Also covered are critical aspects of the project (such as providing students with pre-job training when possible) and some of the unanticipated program outcomes (which included the support and help received from the community). (SB)

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A TITLE III PROJECT

YOUTH SERVICES TRAINING PROGRAM

1972 - 1976

Westport Department of Special Education
15 North Morningside Drive
Westport, Connecticut 06880

Personnel:

Bernice Luskin
Project Coordinator

Robert May
Vocational Teacher

Sue Schnog
School Psychologist

Claire Gold
Assistant Superintendent of
Pupil Personnel & Special
Education

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PART I: INFORMATION AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

B. Project Description

1. Describing the Context

a. The Westport Special Education Program is an expanding one. During the 1974-75 school year, a regional Special Education Center, the Coleytown Developmental Center (pre-school through junior high) was opened in Westport. As far back as 1971-72, when a broad, in-depth Special Education program on the elementary school level was being developed, the need for a counterpart in the junior and senior high school levels became apparent. A critical aspect of junior and senior high school Special Education programs was the need for in-depth vocational training. Evidence of the need for intensive vocational training for special education students came from the following sources:

1.) Administrators, counselors, teachers, parents and students all expressed concern regarding the lack of opportunities for special education students to explore vocational possibilities, and receive adequate supervised on-the-job training while in high school.

2.) Weekly Planning and Placement Team conferences often highlighted the need for realistic career exposure for high school students who have been identified as having a learning disability, are emotionally disturbed or educable mentally retarded.

3.) The regular work study program at Staples High School did not fill needs of special education students. All personnel involved agreed that due to the large number of pupils served and the general nature of the program, special education students enrolled in work study received inadequate specific preparation and on-the-job supervision.

4.) It has often been the experience of special education personnel that when confronted with actual job experiences, the critical area for special education students was that of relations with self and others rather than merely the particulars of the job. Therefore, there was also a need to help special youngsters in the area of personal growth and development.

5.) In addition to the needs expressed by the Special Education Department, the Westport Board of Education made a commitment to broaden the experiences of non-college bound students. There was, and continues to be, a growing community concern that all terminal high school students graduate with skills necessary in today's job market.

Title III funds allowed this department to develop a work study model for special education students, which recognizes the needs of a select group of high school students, who have been identified as having a learning disability, are emotionally disturbed, educable or trainable retarded. Without

Title III funds, this program would have had to wait several years before being incorporated into the Special Education program. The Westport Board of Education has concretely demonstrated its enthusiasm for this program by funding 1/4 of the salary of the program director during the year 1973-74, 1/2 during 1974-75 and proposes to fund 50% of total costs for 1975-76.

b. The fundamental objective of this project is to provide realistic vocational training for approximately 40 special education junior and senior high school students. Students are involved in a work experience in one or more of the following areas:

1.) Teacher aides in nursery, kindergarten and first grade classes of public and private schools.

2.) Health care, cafeteria, laundry, occupational therapy and ground maintenance centers at the protected environment of the Retirement Home of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

3.) Garage attendants at local service stations.

4.) Skills alone will not insure successful job experiences for special education students. Critical to their success are positive feelings about themselves and others. One way to achieve this objective is to help students receive realistic and positive feedback regarding their performance in a vocational training unit. It is our purpose to enable this special group of high school students

to develop realistic and rewarding vocational goals. We think that a program that offers opportunities to explore several job areas and develop skills under highly structured conditions can best result in meaningful career choices. It is critical that youngsters, who in many cases have had years of negative school experiences be provided with the opportunity to enjoy the satisfactions of performing competently in the world of work. For the overwhelming majority of special education youngsters this can best take place under school auspices.

c. Westport, Connecticut is a middle to upper class suburban community of 28,000 with a school population of 6,686. In addition, the Westport Special Education Department serves special education students from Easton, Redding, Weston, Wilton and Fairfield. These towns are involved in the new regional school in Westport, the Coleytown Developmental Center. This project serves approximately 175 students - pre-school through the junior high school.

At this time, Staples High School in Westport is not regional, but serves 80 local special education students. These are youngsters who have been diagnosed as learning disabled, physically handicapped, emotionally maladjusted, or educable mentally retarded. All have been assigned special education programs as a result of a Planning and Placement Team evaluation (PPT).

Since 1968-69, when the Special Education Department embarked on their current program to meet the needs of

special education students, the budget has quadrupled in size. This has been a sequential growth, with classes and services being introduced in the primary levels first. The peak years for the expansion of secondary school classes and services have been 1973-75.

In addition to the concrete financial support that Special Education has received from the Westport Board of Education, the Board has also been committed to broadening the experiences of non-college bound students. Westport school budgets since 1973-74 reflect the community and Board's concern that all terminal high school students graduate with skills necessary in today's market place. The Board's positive interest in Special Education Title III Youth Services Training Program has been concretely demonstrated by its willingness to finance 50% of the 1975-76 costs.

2. Explaining the Project

a. The Youth Services Training Program proposes to provide realistic vocational education to junior and senior high school special education students. The project hopes to provide:

1.) Teacher aide training in local nursery, kindergarten and first grade classes.

2.) A vocational experience in health care, food services, laundry, occupational therapy and grounds maintenance at the Retirement Home of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

3.) Front station garage training at local service stations.

4.) Opportunities for special education students to receive realistic and positive feedback on their performance in a vocational training program.

This project is the only one of its kind in Connecticut. There is a teacher-aide training program for special education students at New York University. Cambridge Latin High School in Cambridge, Massachusetts is now in its fourth year of providing a teacher aide training program for non-academic students. Both these projects have been visited by Westport personnel.

b. In order to train special education students to work as teacher aides, the following program has been designed:

1.) Initial workshop - four periods a week - (total instructional time per week - 5 hours and 20 minutes). This intensive training period includes observational trips, visiting specialists, and a planned curriculum.

2.) After on-the-job placement - weekly workshops (80 minutes per week). These workshops continue skill development, provide time for problem solving and goal setting.

3.) Placement three afternoons a week in a local nursery, kindergarten, or first grade - (approximately 90 minutes each afternoon).

4.) Frequent on-the-job supervision by school psychologist and workshop teacher. (4 hours per week).

5.) Meetings with all receiving eachers to discuss the nature, needs, and problems of

youngsters in the program. Pre-placement, mid-year and evaluation meeting - (9 hours). Half-day substitute teachers provided, if necessary).

6.) Individual conferences with each receiving teacher to discuss the individual youngster's problems and then on an as needed basis to solve them - (30 hours).

7.) Mid-year change of job placement requires student visits prior to the change and teacher conferences.

8.) Parent conferences to clarify program goals and expectations and to do some planning for the future - (12 hours).

Professional personnel required to accomplish the objective:

1.	Project Director	2/10
2.	Workshop Teacher	2/10
3.	School Psychologist	2/10

The initial 4-5 week workshop, plus the then weekly workshops, meet in a classroom equipped as a nursery, kindergarten room. Paints, easels, clay, games, books, blocks and kitchen play corner, allow students to explore and develop skills in using these materials. Guest teachers, field trips and programs provide additional understandings in art, music, story telling, children's books, etc. The Elizabeth M. Gregg book, "What To Do When There's Nothing To Do", helps students plan simple activities for small groups of children. The design of the room also provides an appropriate setting for pre-school and kindergarten visitors.

Another workshop concern is child development. The Ilg and Ames, "Child Behavior from Birth to Ten", along with selected films have helped highlight normal expectations at the various developmental levels.

Lastly, the workshop serves as a problem solving forum. Students bring their concerns regarding specific children, class situations and supervising teacher to the workshop. Fellow students, school psycholegist and workshop teacher all have an opportunity to explore solutions.

In order to provide special education students with vocational experiences in health care, food services, laundry, occupational therapy and grounds maintenance at the Retirement Home of the Sisters of Notre Dame, the following program has been designed.

1.) A rotating program that gives youngsters an opportunity to experience a realistic working situation in varied job stations such as the laundry, cafeteria, occupational therapy room, health care center and ground maintenance (approximately 2½ hours twice a week).

2.) Experience for students in a geriatric center under the direction of a registered nurse (approximately 2½ hours twice a week).

3.) Supervised training for students in an institutional kitchen (approximately 2½ hours twice a week).

4.) Bi-monthly workshops are held for the students while they are at the Convent to cover such topics as nutritional practices, aging, death and dying, and vocational information on re-

lated jobs (½ hour per session). These are run by the project director and the program supervisor at the Convent (10 hours).

5.) Periodic conferences and workshops are held for the Sisters and lay personnel who work with the students to discuss the nature, needs and problems of youngsters in the program. In school teachers of the students often participate as guest resource people (12 hours).

6.) Consultation by project director and school psychologist with the Convent program supervisor and students (2 hours per month).

7.) Open house for parents and professionals and individual conferences as needed (10 hours).

Professional personnel required to accomplish the objective:

1.	Project Director	2/10
2.	Program Supervisor	4/10
3.	School Psychologist	1/10

Students work in the protected environment of the Retirement Home and School of the Sisters of Notre Dame in Wilton. In addition to providing non-competitive and caring surroundings for our students, the Sisters of Notre Dame offer superb training facilities. They have modern, finely equipped kitchen and dining areas as well as a sparkling new Health Center for aging and ailing Sisters. There is an institutional laundry, an occupational therapy room and acres of grounds which require maintenance. All students work under the supervision of the Sister or lay person in charge of a given area as well as under the supervision of the Sister who is the program supervisor at the Convent. Support is provided by the project director

and school psychologist in terms of problem solving and liaison with the schools.

In order to provide special education students with the training necessary to work as garage attendants in local service stations the following program has been designed:

1.) Two ten-week training sessions at a local garage. Each two-hour evening session is taught by an experienced mechanic and a learning disabilities teacher (40 hours).

2.) Training sessions continue in the evening at the high school and provide continued skill development in areas which do not require equipment, such as problem solving and goal setting (20 hours).

3.) Placement a minimum of six hours a week at a local garage.

4.) On the job supervision by project director and learning disabilities teacher (20 hours).

5.) Meeting with employers to describe program and student population (2 hours).

6.) Meeting with parents to clarify program goals and expectations and explore future planning. Individual conferences as needed (5 hours).

7.) Conferences with employers to discuss the individual youngster and then on an as needed basis to problem solve. (20 hours).

Professional personnel required to accomplish the objectives:

1. Project Director 2/10
2. Learning Disabilities teacher 1/10

3. Mechanic teacher 1/10
4. School psychologist 1/10

A significant aspect of the Automotive Unit is the evening rental of a local garage. Students are taught in a fully equipped center with opportunities for real on-the-job training. Another critical factor is the relationship of the mechanic teacher to the students. For some students it's a first opportunity to relate to a young, non-academic, successful business and family man.

The relationship between the learning disabilities teacher and the mechanic is another important ingredient. These two men must be able to communicate comfortably and respect each other's skills. Behavior, expectations and material simplification are the learning disabilities teacher's responsibility. Two men who work well together also allow for the comfortable grouping of students. Slower students have ample time for review, while more skilled youngsters can move at their own pace. The informal, non-school setting is another factor that has resulted in students looking forward to weekly workshop sessions.

Aside from garage rental, another expense has been the purchase of three copies of the Chilton manual. Several film strips and workbooks have been tried. However, students respond most positively to teacher-made material and problems which relate directly to workshop experiences.

In order to help special education students receive realistic and positive feedback regarding their performance in a vocational training program, the following procedure has been established:

The activities employed to accomplish the objective are.

1.) Work experiences in an accepting atmosphere (approximately five or six hours each week).

2.) Positive and realistic feedback of successful performance (2 hours each week).

3.) Goal setting to improve weak areas and thus increase successful experiences and realistic and positive feedback (12 hours per year).

Professional personnel required to accomplish the objective:

1.	Project Director and Teacher Aide Teacher	1.0
2.	School Psychologist	.4
3.	Learning Disabilities Teacher	.1
4.	Mechanic Teacher	.1
5.	Convent Supervisor	.4

It is possible for special education students to receive realistic and positive feedback on their performance in a vocational training placement because of the following critical aspects of this project.

1.) Students receive pre-job training whenever possible.

2.) All employers, teachers, garage owners, Convent personnel, attend meetings where program objectives, student expectations, and problems are discussed.

3.) Background information concerning student strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the job are shared with individual employers.

4.) Close contact and supervision of students by special education staff is maintained.

5.) Student workshops provide on-going opportunities to problem solve and sharpen background and skills.

6.) All students receive a stipend upon completion of a full year's work and academic credit.

Special education students enrolled in the regular workshop program have experienced failure in similar job placements.

Our program provides the structure, support and positive feedback so essential to personal growth. Not only that, but after years of unrealistic academic expectations and classroom passivity, students are able to move into active and rewarding roles.

c. The youngsters in the Youth Services Training Program are all special education students. They have been identified by the Westport Planning and Placement Team as having a learning disability, being emotionally disturbed, physically handicapped or mentally retarded. During the 1973-74 school year, the group composition was as follows:

Age Range:	13-20 years.
Grade Range:	8-12, including trainable mentally retarded and educable retarded
IQ;	50-139
Sex:	Male - 15, Female - 27

d. The project coincides with the academic year.

UNIT	PLACE	TIME
Teacher Aide	Staples High School and local nursery, kindergarten or first grade class	4 days a week 6 hours a week Full school year - Sept. - June
Retirement Home	Retirement Home of the Sisters of Notre Dame	2 days a week 5 hours a week Full school year
Automotive Unit	Commuters Exxon, 570 Riverside Avenue, Westport, and local garages	1.) 2 - 10 week, 2 hour evening session at the garage 2.) 1 - 20 hours in the evening at the local high school 3.) Placement at a local garage when fully prepared - 6 hours a week.

e. Imagine the pleasure and feeling of self-esteem that an obese teenager diagnosed as borderline retarded feels when she walks into her kindergarten placement and is greeted enthusiastically by smiling faces. She is immediately involved and responsible for taking the entire class to the school library. This same student had an earlier work study experience in a kindergarten classroom that ended in disaster in three short weeks.

Without the school psychologist and workshop teacher to confer with the receiving kindergarten teacher, to share P's obesity and body odor problems and judgmental approach along with her love of children and desire to work with them, this youngster would not have had the very special experience of being a successful teachers' aide. Her relationship to the kindergarten teacher was her first one of adult to adult. P. spent the summer of

1974 responsible for a group of children at the town beach school. She is currently enrolled in a child development program at the Community College.

An obsessive, compulsive young man, with a history of early suicide attempts, who was a member of the first learning disabilities class in Westport, was in the program. He was able to successfully deal with one assignment in a highly structured parochial first grade and then a second in an open, individualized kindergarten setting. As a Senior, he elected to work as an aide in the same learning disabilities class in which he had been a student during his elementary school years. It was an extremely difficult assignment. He probingly questioned the teacher and aide, tried different approaches to different situations, related especially well to two students and kept a most insightful diary. G. is presently enrolled in Norwalk Community College, considering career possibilities in a social service area.

As a group, our students often have difficulty expressing themselves. However, the comments below give some indication of their feelings about the program.

"I feel that I really couldnt say much about it, but I really did enjoy working there. I feel if you wanted to relax and free to do things that where to go. The teacher was good she new what she was doing at all times. Even though my atitude doesnt see to hot to you I have learn alot out of doing this I love to go there... Even if I dont go in to this I know how to bring up my own kids."

I enjoyed working (woking) there very much and the teachers were also very kind and I would very much like

to keep my job there. I just loved all the children and I enjoyed seeing their smiling faces and have them greet me. To me this was a worthwhile project."

Supervising teachers have been equally enthusiastic. A few favorite comments:

"Enthusiastic; dependable, carries through on projects; total giving of herself. Cares."

"S. seemed to be able to make decisions about what she should work on with children....she needed few directions and had a curiosity about why things were done in class."

"She was willing to do whatever was needed and much more! The relationship between C. and the children was absolutely heartwarming."

In the Automotive Unit, one learning disabled youngster, with an above-average IQ, had a long school history of marginal performance. He was one of the first in the class to obtain a job and the first to receive a salary increase and extended work hours. D's parents reported that this was one of his first successful school experiences. They observed a teenager with new self-confidence, whose grades improved to such an extent that he earned second honors. This positive approach toward school has continued into D's Senior year. When available, D. has attended this year's Automotive workshop, and has been of assistance, especially with boys having difficulties.

B. was one of two boys who had great difficulty learning all the steps involved in front station service. At his first job, he worked as a trainee with his stipend being paid by the program. His employer found him slow, careless and unable to ask for help when directions were un-

clear. After additional help from the learning disabilities teacher, B. was placed in a new job and has been working successfully since May, 1974.

Students, teachers, employers, as well as parents, have been most positive about the program. Parental comments reflect their concern for the future of their special children.

"This is a most valuable program for students who may have difficulty taking necessary steps to find and keep regular employment. The program gives these students the support they need to succeed and should give them the confidence to pursue other types of work on their own without all the misgivings formerly felt. In G's case, it has been a very worthwhile experience!"

"A wonderful program which I hope can be expanded so all special education students and their parents can be as fortunate as we have been."

"She feels a great sense of accomplishment which is reflected in her general attitude about herself and others."

The Youth Services Training Program cannot possibly serve the needs of all special education youngsters. The Convent Unit was a last chance for an emotionally disturbed student to remain in the mainstream and in contact with reality. For awhile it seemed to be working. She was carried along by the enthusiasm of the other students and the caring environment of the Convent. However, in time, a marked deterioration in her functioning resulted in hospitalization.

One young man, in his second year at the Convent Unit, presents a dual personality. At school he avoids work, is the class clown, and is beginning to travel with

questionable friends. When at the Convent, he willingly scrubs pots, a job he dislikes, with as much expertise as he shows when preparing a salad or baking cookies. His happy disposition and positive attitude are appreciated by all convent personnel.

An indication of what performing a needed job in the adult world means to young people can be understood when one knows that one of our convent-based students bicycled 17 miles - all uphill - the day the school bus didn't run!

A most gratifying and unforeseen aspect of the program is the tremendous support and help that we are receiving from many diverse community members. Private school and Westport teachers, garage operators and the lay and religious staff at Notre Dame are truly concerned with our students. They are extending themselves in every way possible in order to make the program work. Without this reservoir of good will we would have no program.

3. Describing Effectiveness

a. The major measurable objectives are:

1.) To train special education students to work as teacher aides in local nursery, kindergarten and first grade classrooms.

2.) To have special education students experience a variety of realistic work situations in varied job stations such as a health care unit, cafeteria, laundry, occupational therapy room and grounds maintenance.

3.) To train special education students to work as garage attendants in local garages.

4.) To have special education students receive realistic and positive feedback on their per-

formance in a vocational training program.

The special education junior and senior high school students participating in the program include youngsters with learning disabilities, emotional problems or physical handicaps. Some trainable and educable mentally retarded students are also involved. These students are able to attain the objectives listed by receiving training in local garages or the Retirement Home and School of Sisters of Notre Dame, or nursery, kindergarten and first grade classrooms under the conditions detailed above - (Part I - B - 2b).

Due to the special needs of our students, acceptable levels of performance vary. For example, in the Automotive Unit, expectations may range from gaining the minimum skills for front station service to periodic total responsibility for a gas station.

b.

In 1972-73, fourteen students participated in the Youth Services Training Program Teacher Aide Training unit. In 1973-74, a total of thirty-eight students were enrolled in three units of YSTP - Teacher Aide, Automotive, and the Retirement Home and School of the Sisters of Notre Dame. All students have been interviewed prior to enrollment by the Project Director and/or the School Psychologist. The various possibilities have been described and the students' interests and motivation were explored. In many cases, pre-entrance visits to the training site have been made.

The special education high school students who have been in the program have, for the most part, been identified as having a learning disability, being emotionally disturbed, physically handicapped, or educable mentally

retarded. Those who have not been officially part of the special education program were referred by their counselors because of specific problems which would have made them eligible, and were screened by the Staples High School Planning and Placement Team. If the Staples Planning and Placement Team recommended acceptance, the student was then presented to the Central Planning and Placement Team for final approval.

Junior high school students were accepted only for the units at the Retirement Home of the Sisters of Notre Dame. If they were not already in the special education program, they were presented to the Central Planning and Placement Team for admission. Several youngsters from the adolescent trainable and educable retarded classes were in this unit. Suitability for the program was based on the level at which the youngster was actually functioning. Only students in the program were included in the evaluation.

During the 1972-73 school year, an attempt was made to find a control group. School systems in the vicinity were contacted, but most did not have a similar group. Fairfield, Connecticut had a possible sample. However, their youngsters were also involved with a new program of a work experience nature. It was hoped that they would change attitudes as the year progressed and thus would not be a suitable group to use as a control.

When other units were developed in 1973-74, we did not consider it practical to search for a control group due to our initial experience.

c. NA

d. The special occurrences during the project year ranged from a suicide attempt to marriage. These are some of the special problems which may be presented by a special education group. Although there were temporary disruptions and regressions, the long-range interpretation of the project results are not affected by these occurrences because of the success of a majority of students in completing the program and attaining the objectives.

e. The evaluation strategy includes the collection of the following data as it relates to the listed objectives:

Form 1 - Evaluation of each student by Project Director and pertinent program personnel from their observations of on-the-job performance and workshop participation. These are completed mid-year and in June. A letter describing the youngster's performance at his assignment is sent to parents at the same time.

Form 2 - Evaluation by the receiving teacher/employer. Program Director and School Psychologist are jointly responsible for the distribution, collection and interpretation of these forms. Criteria are provided to clarify the form. These are completed at the end of each assignment or at the end of the year.

Form 3 - Student self-evaluation. Students are encouraged to think through performance expectations. These are often translated into a group designed self-evaluation form. Students complete the form in the workshop at the end of each work assignment or at the end of the year.

Form 4 - Parental evaluation. Forms are mailed in May with a stamped return envelope.

Modified Coopersmith Behavior Rating Scale
Completed by school personnel who are not involved with this project, but are familiar with the student's pre and post program activities. (Usually October and May).

Observational Data and Anecdotal Records have been collected by Project Director and School Psychologist.

Over the period of the project's existence, (1972 to the present) we have searched the literature and tried a variety of instruments and techniques (such as Projective Drawings and the Piers Harris Self-Concept Scale) to measure the attainment of our objectives. The listed forms and procedures have proved most relevant and meaningful. Although they lack standardization, they are based on firsthand observation of the behavior measured.

f. Objective 1:
To train special education students to work as teacher aides in local nursery, kindergarten and first grade classrooms.

FINDINGS:	1972-73	1973-74
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN TEACHER AIDE UNIT	14	15
Total Number Successfully Completing Course	10	10
Dropouts and Incompletes		
a. Personal Problems	2	
b. Undue Absences	2	
c. Physical or Emotional Illness		3
d. Moved Out of Area		2
FOLLOW-UP AFTER ONE YEAR:		
a. Continuing high school studies	6	11
b. College Entrance	7	4
c. Related Jobs - Summer and other	8	4*
d. Unrelated Jobs	2	4
e. No Information	1	
f. Marriage		1
g. Sheltered Workshop		1

*One student was hired as a paid aide at his placement when a vacancy occurred.

Objective 2:

To have special education students experience a variety of situations in varied job stations such as health care unit, cafeteria, laundry, occupational therapy room and grounds maintenance.

FINDINGS:

	1973-74
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN CONVENT UNIT	12
Total Number Successfully Completing Course	9
Dropouts and Incompletes	
a. Emotional Illness	2
b. School Adjustment Problems	2

FOLLOW-UP AFTER ONE YEAR:

a. Participating in another segment of the Youth Services Training Program	6
b. Participating in regular work-study program in area of training	1
c. Moved out of area	1
d. Hospitalized	1
e. Placement in process for Vocational Rehabilitation	1
f. High School Senior with College aspirations	1
g. In school but without specific vocational program	2

Objective 3:

To train special education students to work as garage attendants in local garages.

FINDINGS:

	1973-74
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN AUTOMOTIVE UNIT	10
Total number of students successfully completing course	9
Dropouts	
a. Illness	1

FOLLOW-UP AFTER ONE YEAR:

a. Have instructed the automotive club at a junior high school	2
b. Have maintained garage jobs on their own	5
c. Continuing in high school	8
d. Accepted by the Air Force	1
e. Unrelated jobs	4

Objective 4:

To have special education students receive positive and realistic feedback on their performance in a vocational training program.

FINDINGS:

EVALUATION BY STUDENTS OF THEIR PERFORMANCE IN 1973-74 REFLECT THE FEEDBACK WHICH THEY RECEIVED. (Form 3)

a. Teacher Aides:
After the second assignment, a greater number of students saw more aspects of their performance as above-average when compared to their first self-evaluation. Almost no ratings were below-average. (Complete data on file).

b. Automotive Unit:
The boys saw themselves as being reliable and having positive attitudes. They were honest in rating themselves as either average or above-average in all other aspects of their performance. Only two youngsters rated one aspect each below-average.

c. Retirement Home:
All the youngsters at the retirement home felt that they did a good job and had received positive feedback from the Sisters.

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS BY TEACHER/EMPLOYER (Form 1)

The generally positive tone of the Teacher/Employer student evaluations (Form 1) indicate the positive feedback which the teachers/employers transmitted to the students during their assignment.

PARENTAL EVALUATION (FORM 4)

All of the parents who responded felt that they had seen personal growth in their son or daughter which they thought was related to the program. This growth is the result of positive and realistic feedback.

MODIFIED COOPERSMITH BEHAVIOR RATING SCALE, 1973-74

The results of this scale were encouraging. Eleven students showed positive and generally substantial growth in their behavior patterns. Ten youngsters remained about the same. Only four showed a negative trend.

Project size made it more meaningful to do a numerical rather than a statistical analysis.

6. A statistical analysis of the data was impractical due to the small number of students involved. Control groups were not used (see 3b). From a numerical evaluation of the results, the following conclusions may be drawn:

    1. It is possible to train special education students to work as aides in the classroom. In spite of their youth, inexperience, problems and the prevailing poor economic conditions, many of the students who sought jobs related to their training were able to obtain them.

    2. It is possible to have special education students experience a variety of realistic work situations in varied job stations. Most students were able to perform adequately on the job. Many of them were able to make a choice of a particular area for specialization.

3. It is possible to train special education students to work as garage attendants. During the energy crisis and in spite of their youth, inexperience, problems and the generally poor economic conditions, the students obtained jobs at local garages and, for the most part, were able to keep them. Seven of the nine students completing the course have maintained related jobs on their own.

4. It is possible for special education students to receive realistic and positive feedback on their performance in a vocational training program. As reported in 3f, the students generally saw themselves as at least average due to the feedback they received.

The educational significance of these findings is that this special school population was provided with vocational training which was not previously available. A program similar to the Teacher Aide Unit has been initiated for the general student body. Observational evidence also points up the significance of removing a difficult group from the high school environment and providing them with a meaningful, "hands on" learning experience.

Our program provides the structure, support and positive feedback so essential to personal growth. Not only that, but after years of unrealistic academic expectations and classroom passivity, students are able to move into active and rewarding roles. The stipend and academic credit are real measures of success for our students. Their improved self-image, as a result of this program, is apparent - not just on scales and forms, but on their faces and in their future planning.

h. The attainment of the objectives detailed above clearly demonstrates that the project is effective. Special education students were provided with vocational training which was not previously available.

In addition, the following approaches and methods which are not commonly used have been found to be critical aspects of the project:

1.) Students receive pre-job training whenever possible.

2.) All employers, teachers, garage owners, and Convent personnel, attend meetings where program objectives, student expectations and problems are discussed.

3.) Background information concerning student strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the job are shared with individual employers.

4.) Close contact and supervision of students by Special Education staff is maintained.

5.) Student workshops provide on-going opportunities to problem solve and sharpen background and skills.

6.) All students receive a stipend upon completion of the full year's work and academic credit.

We have had three years of experience with youngsters who range from trainable retarded to superior in intelligence, who have been physically handicapped, or learning disabled, or emotionally disturbed. The unexpected level of success with this difficult population gives us assurance that the results of this project are replicable.

4. Describing Costs

The 1973-74 total cost for The Youth Services Training Program was $44,585. Developmental costs were $17,675 and Operational, $26,910. Start-up costs for another district would be approximately $5,550.00.

5. Describing Exportability Factors

It is possible to adopt one or more units of The Youth Services Training Program. Procedures would vary depending on the unit.

A general approach would be to run workshops which would involve:

1.) Program description.

2.) Opportunity to meet with students.

3.) Opportunity to meet with teachers or employers.

4.) Demonstration of student training workshops.

5.) Opportunity for exploration of program development.

6.) Opportunity for exploration of specifics with matching key personnel.

7.) Exchange of materials used in program such as forms, books, films, etc.

The specifics for each unit need to be assembled and fully developed for presentation to prospective adopters. After the initial workshops, it would be important to have conference time during the year. An end of the year workshop would be valuable to share experiences, plan future programs and evaluate the effectiveness of the adoption.

It is possible to adopt one or more units of The Youth Services Training Program. The training opportunity most available in school systems involves the Teacher Aide Unit. A model nursery, kindergarten room set up by Title III funds in our high school has been a most helpful teaching center. Assorted books on child development, child activities, special interest books and film rentals should be included by the adopters.

Adoption of the Automotive Unit requires leg-work and good community public relations. One needs a local garage for the evening workshop and jobs for special education students. Useful materials are several copies of Chilton's manual.

It would be difficult to discover as ideal a situation as the Retirement Home and School of the Sisters of Notre Dame. However, the Sisters involved feel that there are other religious facilities which would benefit from this kind of interchange.

As a result of our experience, we think that many segments of community are willing to be involved in helping young people explore vocational opportunities. One example is a new unit being developed at the Westport Fire Department. This exciting program is in its pilot year.

Possible adopters need to explore their community resources to develop realistic, meaningful vocational programs.

7. Describing Unanticipated Outcomes and Spinoff Findings

Some unanticipated outcomes:

1.) Students in the Teacher Aide unit receive preparation for future parenthood.

2.) Some students receive automotive training which will be useful to them no matter what their final vocational choice is.

3.) Many parents of teacher aide students reported surprise and pleasure that their special youngsters were interested and able to continue their education beyond high school.

4.) A most gratifying, unforeseen aspect of the program is the tremendous support and help received from many diverse community members.